



# 2006 Legislature Under Way

**Bill Hinkle**

**13th District State Representative**

## Serving citizens in:

- Kittitas
- Yakima and
- Grant counties

## Committees:

- Health Care  
(Ranking Republican)
- Children and Family Services
- Appropriations

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Dear Friends,

Lawmakers have convened in Olympia for a legislative session scheduled to last 60 days. **Thank you** for the opportunity to serve you in the House of Representatives.

We have several big issues on our plate this year. One of the most pressing is **health care reform**. As ranking Republican on the Health Care Committee, I'm committed to making true changes to our health care system that curtail the rising costs for consumers and employers. I will insist on a change in the culture of health care and introduce a system that gives consumers more choices of providers, doctors, and insurance companies.

Another big priority this year is **limiting state spending**. The Legislature passed a \$26 billion two-year budget last session. Our economists tell us we can now expect up to \$1.4 billion in revenue that was not expected when we adopted that budget. The majority party wants to go on a spending spree and spend those surplus dollars on new programs. I'm committed to **budget restraint!** I'll work to put controls back on state spending and keep the majority from spending our future today.

I will also continue to work hard this year to **ensure public safety**. I plan to introduce legislation to increase penalties for assaulting or injuring emergency workers during the course of their duty and work to shore up penalties for sex offenders and drug makers. I've also been working on the Joint Task Force for Child Safety and will report the preliminary findings of that special group. You'll find more about those issues in this newsletter.

I represent you best when we **communicate regularly**. Please contact me whenever you have a question or concern, or need help dealing with a state agency. I look forward to hearing from you.

Warmest regards,

Rep. Bill Hinkle

## Helping children and families



Over the past several months, I've been serving as co-chair of the Joint Task Force on Child Safety. The task force, created under SHB 2156 last session, includes legislators, members from the Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, DSHS staff, public defenders, judges, social workers, foster parents, birth parents and others involved in the child welfare system.

The bill creating the task force grew out of "Sirita's Law," a bill I introduced last session. Sirita's Law was named after Sirita Sotelo, who died before her fifth birthday, beaten to death at the home of her father and stepmother. Sirita had spent most of her life in and out of foster care, and the state had recently moved her in with her father. Sirita's foster father is a member of the task force.

The group is studying issues such as: state and federal law on child placement and termination of parental rights; when and how children are removed from homes and reunited with parents; what transition services are available for families; how case workers and supervisors share information; and best practices regarding child protection.

We are working on a report to the legislature that will outline the findings of the Task Force. I'll present those findings to you in my next newsletter in the spring.

## Making health care accessible and affordable

Because I was appointed Ranking Republican on the **House Health Care Committee** this year, I'm taking a leadership role in making changes to our health care system. One of our biggest challenges will be finding ways to meet citizens' needs for flexible, affordable and tailored health insurance plans.

I've come up with solutions to the health care crisis and have introduced legislation in the 2006 session that offers a better future for consumers. This legislation brings reforms to the private insurance marketplace so that individuals and employers have access to affordable health insurance options. Insurers in this state are saddled with the burden of government mandates on insurance coverage they offer. In Washington, we have 49 government mandates. This has increased costs and reduced choices for the health care consumer. We need a business climate for insurance companies that will have them competing for every health care dollar in Washington, bringing us greater access and lower premiums.

I've also introduced House Bill 2556 that allows Medicaid recipients to opt into personal health accounts. In the 2004 session, I worked to pass legislation creating individual development accounts for recipients of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. This legislation passed with bipartisan support. Following this model, we can create a system in which Medicaid recipients can build a health care asset, which they can spend on approved medical cost and take with them as their economic situation improves. Under our current system, families lose coverage as their financial status improves. As with our successful TANF reform, we need to invest in individuals, not government programs.



**Representative Bill Hinkle • 13th District**



## Controlling state spending

State economists have told us that because of Washington's improving economy, we can expect nearly **\$1.4 billion of budget surplus** revenues by the end of the fiscal year in 2007. This is great news, of course. But the majority party is ready to spend the surplus on new programs. I plan to work to **control this spending**.

I will work to create a permanent "rainy day" fund. Adding the **rainy day fund** to the state constitution will require lawmakers to set aside money at each budget cycle to prepare for the bad times. We've all seen the up-and-down nature of this state's economy—there are good years and bad years. We need to prepare for the bad years by socking money away to pay for the needed programs when times are tough.

Every working family operates with this kind of philosophy and so should state government.

## Local legislation

I am sponsoring several pieces of legislation this year that will directly affect people in our district. Here are two of them:

- **Election of judges.** I have introduced a bill to require judges to be on the general election ballot, even if they have no opponent. Currently judge opponents (after the primary), are not required to appear on the general election ballot. I believe our 13th District citizens should be able to vote on their judges when their terms are up to affirm those judges are doing a good enough job to warrant re-election.
- **Continuing water rights reform.** I am proud to report the bill I sponsored last year that **gives local citizens**, rather than bureaucrats in Olympia, **more control over our water resources** passed and was signed by the governor. I will continue introducing legislation that attempts to untangle years of government interference in water rights in the 13th District.



## Protecting emergency workers

I introduced legislation that would make it a felony to assault or injure emergency workers such as firefighters, paramedics, and police during the course of their duty. This would include vehicular assault. I believe the penalties for assaulting these brave men and women are too lenient; my legislation will elevate the crime to a felony and hold perpetrators accountable.



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## Accessing Olympia through the Web

You may be surprised how many bills moving through the Legislature will have a direct impact on you. The Internet is a great way to find those bills and offer your input. It is also a good way to get information related to state government. Here are some sites you might find helpful:

- **Leg.wa.gov** – Here you'll find committee meeting schedules and nearly everything else you want to know about the Legislature.
- **Access.wa.gov** – Access state agencies, apply for unemployment benefits, find a list of local events and festivals, renew your car tabs, and more.
- **SBA.gov and/or WSBDC.org** – Need help starting or operating a small business? You'll find it here.

Remember, you can contact me anytime at: Hinkle.  
Bill@leg.wa.gov. I want to hear from you.



Rep. Hinkle is House Republicans' lead negotiator on issues related to health care.

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